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THE INCIDENCE OF WIFE ASSAULT IN ALBERTA

by

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Introduction

Assault is typically defined as any violent act directed toward another and intended to cause pain or injury. Over the past 20 years a recognition has developed that assault is not restricted to interactions between strangers but occurs commonly between family members. In 1975, a National survey was done in the U.S. of the frequency and incidence of family violence (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980). The emphasis of this survey and others to follow has been on self-reports of using or being a victim of physically abusive or assaultive actions. For the sake of comparability, we have adhered to this emphasis in the present study. The advantage in so doing is to make the current research directly comparable to the considerable corpus of published incidence research by Straus and his colleagues on U.S. family violence.

Discussions of wife assault in Canada have proceeded without a firm incidence data base. MacLeod (1980), for example, estimated that "there are ten unreported cases for every call by a battered wife to the police" (p. 21). This 10 to 1 ratio is an approximation based on a study by Handelman and Ward (1976) in which no actual victimization data were collected. Yet, despite this weak support, this statistic has been cited in newspaper reports as though it did represent an empirical study.

A typical example is a report in the Toronto Star (March 1, 1986, p. 15) describing the belated recognition by church groups of wife assault as a serious problem.

"Authorities can only guess at how extensive the violence is. But on the issue of violence against women, authorities accept that 1 in 10 Canadian women is abused by a husband, common-law husband or lover. Some say the figure is conservative and may be as high as one in five".

A more recent report by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women estimated the "real number" of battered women in Canada at approximately one million per year (Globe & Mail,June 9,1987). Much has already been written about the difficulties in detecting violence that occurs "behind closed doors"(Straus et al.1980) and will not be repeated here.

Although no one perfect method exists to assess all incidents of family violence, a random survey of how families deal with "inevitable conflicts" appears to present the broadest picture. Dutton (1987a) for example, pointed out how "crime victim surveys" underdetect family violence which the victims themselves do not define as crimes. Since there is no standard definition of abuse and no consensus on the degree of severity of an act that constitutes abuse, we will adhere to conventional definitions and operational measures developed in the work of Straus (Straus, 1979; Gelles & Straus, 1979; Straus, 1980).

Straus (1979) defines violence as any act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of causing physical pain or injury to another person. Gelles and Straus (1979) further explicate this definition and analyze alternative definitions. Typically, abuse has been defined and restricted to physical abuse, although psychological/verbal abuse can itself have long-term negative consequences for the victim (Finkelhor, 1979).

Review of the Literature

The Conflict Tactics Scale

Although a variety of measures of family violence exist (e.g., Straus, 1979; Hudson & McIntosh, 1981; Fagan & Wexler, 1985), by far the most extensively used is the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979). This instrument has been refined in numerous studies of family violence (e.g., Allen & Straus, 1980; Cate et al., 1982; Henton et al., 1983; Giles-Sims, 1983; Hornung et al., 1981; Jorgensen, 1977; Straus, 1974). Three different studies have established that the CTS measures three factorially separate variables (Jorgensen, 1977; Schumm et al., 1982; Straus, 1979): reasoning, verbal aggression and violence or physical aggression.

The CTS consists of 18 items describing various ways of handling interpersonal conflict. The items range in order of presentation from reasoning through verbal aggression to physical aggression. Raw scores representing frequency ranges vary from 0 ("never") to 6 ("more than twenty times") for each item. Total scores for each subscale are derived by summing the raw scores for the items used. One can use the CTS to identify conflict tactics between any two family members by simply altering the instructions slightly.

An obvious question about the measurement of family violence is whether respondents would report violent acts to an

anonymous interviewer. While we might expect some underreporting to occur, several findings suggest that the CTS is a highly refined instrument with respectable validity. First, "refusal rates" by respondents to answer questions about family conflict are no higher than for telephone surveys in general (Straus et al. 1980). Secondly, face to face administrations of the scale have found no discernable drop in completion rates as respondents moved from the less to the more sensitive questions concerning the use of violence to resolve conflict. When efforts have been made to establish interviewer - respondent "rapport" the report rates for violence have been similar to telephone interviews. These results suggest that the structure of the CTS with rapport - building items preceding the violence items maximizes the likelihood of respondents reporting sensitive items. (Straus et al. 1980)

Straus (1979) provides data from a U.S. national survey of 2,142 households bearing on the psychometric properties of the test. The internal consistency of the subfactors are as follows: verbal aggression alpha =.80, physical aggression alpha = .83, reasoning alpha = .50. Validity data have been generated by comparing reports of different family members (Straus, 1974; Browing & Dutton, 1986) or comparing CTS scores with in depth interviews (Gelles, 1972).

The largest problem in assessing conflict tactics in the family is the potential for underreporting of aggressive tactics due to social embarrassment. Straus has attempted to mitigate

this problem in the design of the CTS by (1) presenting the instrument to the respondent in the context of family disagreements "which all families experience" and by (2) ordering the items so that more socially acceptable tactics can be reported first.

The introduction of the CTS asks respondents to think of situations in the past year (or throughout their marriage) where they have had conflict with specified family members and to indicate how often they used the actions described on the CTS to resolve the conflict. Violent acts include all actions from throwing something at the other to using a weapon (knife or gun) on the other. A Severe Violence subscale includes "kicked, bit or hit with fist" up to "used a weapon". These items are more likely to generate injury and are more consistent with de facto discretionary criteria for arrest used by police.

Spouse violence is defined as any action from the Overall Violence Index used by one spouse to resolve conflict with the other. Wife beating refers to acts from the Severe Violence Subscale used by a man and directed toward his wife. Because of the discrepancy in size and strength between men and women, these actions are likely to be more damaging than when performed by women (with the exception of use of weapons). Berk, Berk, Loseke and Rauma (1983) reported that the injured party in 262 "domestic disturbance" calls they monitored with police was a woman 94% of the time and a man 14% of the time. Hence, wife assault is clearly more serious than husband assault since wives are

disproportionately the injured party in spousal violence (Berk et al., 1982). Wife assault will be the focus of the data presented in this report.

The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey

The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey consisted of 61,000 telephone interviews conducted by Statistics Canada interviewers in seven major urban centers (Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax-Dartmouth and St. John's). A random sample of residents who were 16 years of age or older were asked about their perceptions of crime and their experience with being victimized. The survey "was not designed specifically to measure domestic violence" (Bulletin 4, Appendix 3) but asked respondents whether, in the year preceding the survey (1981), they had been (1) knifed, shot or attacked with a weapon; (2) beat up, hit, kicked or had something like a rock or bottle thrown at them; (3) threatened with a weapon; and (4)attacked or molested.

Gender of the victim and relationship to the assailant were recorded, but the spouse/ex-spouse category may have excluded women reporting assaults by cohabiting men. The female population (over 16) of the cities studied was 2,618,900. The "estimated" (i.e. projected) number reporting being victimized by assault was 97,700 or 26.8%. These women were victimized a total of 119,300 times, 16% of them reporting more than one victimization and 6% reporting 5 or more victimizations. Seventy

percent of these 6,100 "series assaults" (5 or more) occurred in the victim's home and 36% involved a spouse or ex-spouse.

Rates for the response category "any partner" are inexplicably not reported. No questions were asked about victim reactions that might have accounted for differential behavior in repeater-nonrepeater assaultive males. Separated women were most at risk for assaults by marital partners, reporting 5.5% spousal assault rates (compared to .4 for "all female victims").

Police become aware of assaults by a spouse/ex-spouse 47.5% of the time (10% reported by third parties, 37% by the victim). Sixty-one percent of women assaulted by their spouses were injured in the attack and 27% required medical treatment for their injuries (based on 10,100 estimated incidents). Although the survey asked questions about subsequent charges and court appearances it did not ask about convictions nor did it report the data on number of charges or court appearances. No non-urban data are available.

The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey created a context for reporting "crime" in the interview with respondents. Since many women do not consider violence by their husband to constitute a criminal act (Gelles, 1980), considerable underreporting may have ensued. Underreporting of wife assault can be estimated in survey research by interviewing known victims who are not aware that they have been selected on the basis of their victim status. Discrepancies in reporting (from 100%) provide a measure of underreporting. Phone surveys and

face-to-face interviews produce approximately equal amounts of underreporting (Smith, 1986). Failing the availability of a nationwide Canadian estimate, we are forced to base our estimates on U.S. incidence rates, yet these tell us nothing about Canadian regional variation and may not provide accurate estimates of Canadian incidence.

U.S. Surveys

The National Crime Survey (NCS) in the U.S. used a stratified multi-cluster sample design. The Bureau of Census selected a rotating sample of 72,000 households that were representative of the entire population of the U.S. (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1976). Of these, 60,000 yielded interviews. Sample households are interviewed every six months until, over time, seven interviews have been completed in each household. At each interview, respondents are asked to recall incidents of crime that occurred during the previous six months.

As with the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey, the National Crime Survey was not specifically designed to answer certain questions that are especially important to family violence research. "Spouse or ex-spouse" is a single category used to define the victim's relationship to the offender, so no reliable distinction can be made between assaults that occurred while the victim was married to the offender and those that occurred after separation (Gaguin,1977). The NCS survey revealed that 32% of assault by a spouse/ex-spouse were repeated 3 or more

times but did not ask questions about victim reactions that may have accounted for repeater/non-repeater differences.

For a total of 1,058,500 victimizations, injuries resulted in 56.8%, medical care was required for 23%, and hospitalization for 14.3%. Twenty-one percent of the victims lost one or more days from work as a result of the attack. Fifty-five percent reported the victimization to the police.

In surveys such as the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey and the National Crime Survey which are defined to the victim as "crime" surveys, report rates to police for assaults by husbands are relatively high (Canadian Urban Victimization Survey = 37%, National Crime Survey = 55%). In surveys of spousal violence per se (e.g., Schulman, 1979) rates of reporting "serious assaults" (defined by the CTS subscale) to the police are only 17%. One interpretation of this discrepancy is that many violent intraspousal acts are not considered criminal by the victim. To the extent the victim considers the action criminal, they are more likely to report to police and less likely to report the act to an interviewer interested in "crime"against the respondent (see also Dutton, 1987).

The Kentucky Survey

Schulman (1979) conducted a survey with a representative sample of 1,793 women in the State of Kentucky who were married or living with a male partner. The survey was conducted by Louis Harris and Associates by telephone from New York City. Only 9%

of eligible contacts refused the interview. Schulman used the Conflict Tactics Scale as well as a battery of "aftermath" questions concerning police response, use of hospital services, etc. Schulman attributed his low refusal rate to sensitivity training of telephone interviewers who learned to assess respondent's reluctance to speak and made appointments to call back if the respondent indicated she was not alone at the time (18% of interviews resulted from calls back).

Schulman focused exclusively on wife assault and reported that 8.7% of his sample had been victimized by severe violence at some point in their marriage. Overall violence levels were 21.0%. Schulman reported a wife assault rate for urban areas that was double the rate of rural areas (16% vs. 8%) for the preceding year. He also found that 63% of wife assaulters repeated assault within a 12-month time period. Socio-economic indicators revealed that wife assault rates did not vary markedly with family income (rates were as follows: ($7,500 - 12%; $7,500 - $14,999 - 12%; 15,000-24,999 - 11%, > $25,000 - 7%) nor with education. Those with a grade 8 education or less had a 7% assault rate in the preceding year, college-educated males had a 9% rate.

Women who reported witnessing violence in their family of origin were much more likely to report being victimized by their spouse than women who did not witness father-mother violence (28% vs. 7%). Aftermath questions revealed that 9% of all violent incidents required medical attention for the victim, 15% of

severe incidents required medical attention. Most frequently, medical attention was sought at emergency shelters. Parenthetically, a study by Stark, Flitcraft and Frazier (1979) found that 33% of all injuries presented by women to urban hospital emergency rooms are caused by wife assault.

Schulman also found that police were called in 9% of all violent incidents and 17% of severe incidents. The urban rate of reporting to police was double the rural rate (14 vs. 7%). Women with higher occupational statuses were least likely to report. Police arrest rates varied greatly: in urban settings, they arrested or obtained a warrant for the arrest of the husband in 38% of all reported incidents, in rural settings, they did so 56% of the time. Only 4% of all assaults and 6% of serious assaults went to court.

The 1975 U.S. National Survey

The 1975 U.S. National Survey on incidence of spouse assault and child abuse (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980) was carried out by Response Analysis Corporation of Princeton, New Jersey. The National Probability Sample was determined by (1) selecting a national sample of 103 primary areas (counties or groups of counties) stratified by geographic region, type of community and other population characteristics; (2) selecting 300 interviewing locations (census enumeration tracts) from the national sample for use into sample segments of 10.25 housing units; (3) selecting specific sample segments in each

interviewing location for field administration of the survey; and (4) randomly choosing the eligible person to be interviewed using a specific scheme assigned for each sample household.

Eligible families consisted of a couple who identified themselves as being "married" or being a couple (cohabiting as a conjugal unit). Hence, only intact families were sampled which may have lowered the incidence rate. Only one male (n = 960) or one female (n = 1,183) was interviewed in each family, so no intra-family discrepancies in reporting were available. Interviews were conducted face-to-face.

Comparisons with census data revealed that this sample was representative of American families on all major demographic attributes including the proportion of unmarried cohabiting couples (Yllo & Straus, 1978). A combination of call backs, letters and monetary incentives resulted in a completion rate of 65%. This compares with a 70% completion rate for all U.S. national surveys, conducted face-to-face, which, given the sensitive nature of the topic is an encouraging result (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980).

The major results of the 1975 U.S. National Survey were that spousal violence was reported by 27.8% of couples as occurring at some time in their marriage. Severe violence was reported by 12.6%. Husband to wife violence rates and wife to husband violence rates were quite similar regardless of the sex of the respondent and whether all violence or just severe violence was considered. The highest rates of intra-family

violence are for females toward siblings (78.5%), males toward siblings (69.5%) and mothers toward children (67.8%). Severe violence by mothers toward children was self-reported by 17.7% of the female sample.

The 1985 U.S. National Survey

In 1985, a U.S. national probability sample of 6,002 households was obtained by telephone interviews conducted by Louis Harris and Associates (Straus & Gelles, 1986). The sample criteria were broadened in this survey to include not only married or cohabiting couples but any household with an adult over 18 who was divorced or separated in the last two years. For the sake of comparability, Straus & Gelles (1986) compared data from the 1985 subsample of 3,520 married/cohabiting couple with their 1975 sample. The response rate was 84%.

Table 1

U.S.Wife Assault Surveys

	Straus, Straus & Schulman (1979) n = 1,793	Gelles (1975) n = 2,143	Gelles & Steinmetz (1985) n = 3,520
Any violence ever in marriage	21.0%	28.0%	n.a.
Severe violence ever in marriage	8.7%	12.1%	11.3%
Severe violence in past year	4.1%	3.8%	3.0%

Husband to wife violence declined from 12.1 to 11.3% between 1975 and 1985 (see TABLE 1). This decline also occurred

for severe violence which decreased by 21% (from 3.8 to 3.0 reports per hundred couples). The use of severe violence by couples decreased significantly ($t = 3.24$, $p < .01$).

Campaigns against wife assault have began only in the last decade and fewer resources have been invested than is the case for child abuse, for example.

An alternative explanation for rate changes between the two surveys is that the 1975 survey was face-to-face and the 1985 survey was a telephone survey. Although research on differences between telephone and in-person interviews has shown no major differences in completion rates (Groves & Kahn, 1979; Marcus & Crane, 1986), the telephone survey did produce a 20% higher completion rate. Straus and Gelles (1986) speculate that those who refuse to participate in surveys of this sort are more likely to be violent. If this is the case, the more representative 1985 sample should, ceteris paribus, have produced higher reporting rates. The lower rates found may indicate that the "true" decline from 1975-1985 is even greater than appears in the data.

An alternative explanation is that the publicizing of family violence has made respondents less likely to report what is now viewed as inappropriate behavior. Straus and Gelles argue that even if this is the case, it represents an important shift is taking place in public attitudes. Finally, Straus and Gelles consider a constellation of factors that could produce lowered rates of family violence: increases in average age at first

marriage, increases in average age for having a first child, declines in the number of children per family, greater equality between spouses, the movement of women into the workforce, an improved economic climate, increases in transition houses, treatment programs for wife assaulters, and changes in criminal justice policy.

The All Alberta Study

For the past ten studies, the annual survey project conducted by the Population Research Laboratory (PRL) has been confined to the corporate boundaries of the City of Edmonton (Edmonton Area Study, EAS). However, for this eleventh year, an expanded Study was undertaken to include all of Alberta comprising both face-to-face and telephone interviewing. Face-to-face interviewing was conducted in the City of Edmonton while telephone interviewing was conducted for the remainder of the Province. The Department of Sociology, University of Alberta, conducts the AAS and EAS Studies through its research facility, the Population Research Laboratory. Over the years, the project has afforded University researchers and local community agencies an opportunity to investigate and explore social issues of importance to Albertans in an on-going research framework.

Two questionnaires were used for the Study, one for the face-to-face component and one for the telephone component. All the telephone questions were taken from the face-to-face

instrument which was about one-half the length of the face-to-face questionnaire. Questions were virtually identical though a few questions had additional wording for suitable adminstration over the telephone. No response categories or scales were altered. Both questionnaires were thoroughly pretested on a total of fifty-nine Edmonton householders.

Sampling Design

Main features of the sampling design are as follows:

1. Province of Alberta delineated into three areas.
   a. City of Edmonton for face-to-face interviewing.
   b. City of Calgary for telephone interviewing.
   c. Remainder of the Province for telephone interviewing
2. Two-stage selection process.
   a. Selection of households.
   b. Selection of respondent with each household.

To retain the comparability of the Edmonton face-to-face sample with past EAS studies, a sample size of 400 or more was deemed necessary. This would also permit Edmonton to be analyzed as a separate entity. On the other hand, the sample sizes for Calgary and Other Alberta were primarily determined by budgetary constraints. At the same time, a minimum sample size was sought to permit separate analysis for these two areas.

Face to Face Population Edmonton

The 1987 Edmonton population universe was designated as all persons 18 years of age or older who at the time of the survey were living in a dwelling unit that was enumerated during the City of Edmonton Civic Census in the spring of 1986. As in recent previous Edmonton Area Studies, the sampling frame consisted of a computerized list of addresses compiled by the City of Edmonton from their most current enumeration (1986). From the computer tape, a simple random sample of 620 addresses for personal interviewing was selected. Nursing homes, military and temporary residences were deleted from the sample. Within the household, one eligible person was selected as the respondent for the one hour interview. Interviewers were instructed to obtain an equal number of male and female respondents within their allotment of interviews. As adult males are generally more difficult to contact, the following selection procedure guidelines were set for the interviewers to assist them in obtaining their quotas.

a. The dwelling unit must be the person's usual place of residence and he/she must be 18 years of age or older.
b. If an adult male answers the door and is willing to be interviewed, he is the respondent.
c. If an adult female answers the door and there is an adult male present who is willing to be interviewed, interview the male. If the male is not willing to be interviewed, and the female is willing, interview the female.

d. If an adult female answers the door and there is no adult male present, choose her as the respondent.

The final sex breakdown of the sample, using the above procedures, was 50.7% male and 49.3% female. In households where a completed interview was obtained, 90% of the first eligible persons accepted. Fifty-eight percent of the first eligible persons encountered were female.

Telephone Population - Calgary and Other Alberta Areas

The population universe designated for telephone interviewing was all persons 18 years of age or older who at the time of the survey were living in a dwelling unit in Alberta outside of the City of Edmonton that could be contacted by direct-dialing. From this population two samples were drawn to cover the area: the first one represented the City of Calgary and the second represented the remainder of the random sample.

The three-digit prefixes of the exchanges in Calgary were assembled to generate seven-digit telephone numbers. This was done in two stages: First, an exchange was randomly selected, then a four-digit random number between 0000 and 9999 was selected and appended to the three-digit number of the exchange. This process was repeated to obtain as many telephone numbers as needed. Any duplicates were discarded. The telephone numbers were then checked against the most recent edition of the "Calgary Numerical and Street Address Directory" to eliminate businesses and numbers in non-existent banks. It was not difficult to

discern precisely the working banks as the telephone numbers are in ascending order.

The three-digit exchange prefixes were not used for selection for "Other Alberta Areas" as they were for Calgary because no "reverse directory" is available for these areas to screen out the large number of non-working numbers that would be generated. Therefore, a different approach was implemented to reduce to occurrence of non-working numbers. It was as follows. All the most current telephone directories for these areas (a total of 18) were obtained from Alberta Government Telephones (AGT) and a 10 percent sample of telephone numbers was keypunched for processing by computer. The total number of telephone numbers extracted was 51,953.

The process commenced by selecting random pages from each directory (comprising cities, towns and surrounding rural areas) and recording 10 percent of the total number of columns of telephone numbers into a computer file. From these telephone numbers, the last two digits were stripped off to derive five digits banks. Duplicates were eliminated. Pay-phone numbers in the province have a "9" as the fourth digit e.g. 484-9xxx. Although no residences or businesses are supposed to have the fourth digit as "9" a cursory check of the directories revealed that there were sufficient number that had this digit to warrant not screening out these numbers as pay-phones. The actual sample of telephone numbers was then generated from the file of banks by selecting a simple random sample of five-digit banks with

replacement and appending a random number between 00 and 99 to each of them. The resulting telephone numbers were examined for duplicates and repetitions were discarded.

As with the face-to-face interviewers, the telephone interviewers were given instructions to obtain an equal number of male and female respondents in their assignments. Again as adult males are generally more difficult to contact, the selection procedure guidelines were exactly the same as they were to the face-to-face interviewing. At the telephone number selected:

a. The dwelling unit must be the person's usual place of residence and he/she must be 18 years of age or older
b. If an adult male answers the phone and is willing to be interviewed, he is the respondent.
c. If an adult female answers the phone and there is an adult male present who is willing to be interviewed, interview the male. If the male is not willing to be interviewed, and the female is willing, interview the female.
d. If an adult female answers the phone and there is no adult male present, choose her as the respondent. The final sex breakdown of the samples, using the above procedures, was:

Table 2

Gender Breakdown for Regions AAS

	Male	Female
Calgary	47.5%	52.5%
Other Alberta	49.3%	50.7%

Calculation of Weights

The final sample obtained for each area is not proportional to the Alberta population it makes up. For instance, Edmonton is over-sampled as shown by Table 3. Edmonton makes up only 24% of the Alberta population but has 43% of the interviews. Therefore, in order to combine the samples for a provincial sample weighting is necessary. The following table contains the information used to calculate the weights. If the samples are being analyzed individually, then no weighting is necessary; for example, if the researcher is only interested in the Edmonton responses.

The calculation of response rates in Table 4 is based on the corrected sample. Error-free and clean sampling frames should yield the "corrected sample" without adjustments. However, in practice, when using public documents that are time-dated the perfect sampling frame is rarely found.

Table 3

Calculation of Weights

	Pop* 1986	Percent of Pop.	Sample Size	Percent of Samp.	Weight Factor	Weighted Sample
Edm	573,982	24.26	454	43.45	0.558	254
Cal	636,104	26.89	244	23.35	1.152	281
Other	1,155,739	48.85	347	33.21	1.472	510
TOTAL	2,365,825	100.00	1045	100.00		1045

*The total 18+ population for 1986 for Calgary was not available. Therefore total population was used in calculation of weights.

Table 4

Final Questionnaire Status for
Telephone and Face-to-Face to Samples

	Telephone Other Alberta	Telephone Calgary	Face-to-Face Edmonton
Refused	9.3%	14.5%	18.3%
No contact	9.5	6.3	4.4
Language problem	.5	2.5	1.0
Total non-response	19.3%	23.3%	23.7%
Completed interview	80.7	76.7	76.3
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0

Table 5 is a summary of some of the major demographic variables.

Table 5

Demographic Profile of Respondents

	Telephone Other Alberta	Telephone Calgary	Face-to-Face Edmonton
Age (median)	40	33	38
Marital Status			
single.....	15%	25%	21%
married/common-law.....	71%	61%	58%
divorced/sep/widowed	15%	14%	21%
Religion			
Protestant	64%	50%	46%
Roman Catholic	22%	25%	31%
Other	2%	3%	5%
No Preference/affiliation	12%	23%	18%
Income Ranges (median)			
household's.....$30-31999		$32-33999	$28-29999
respondent's $14-15999		$18-19999	$18-19999
Dwelling Unit			
single-detached house ...	77%	58%	54%
multiple family apartments.	9%	21%	29%
row/town house	3%	9%	9%
semi-detached/duplex	4%	11%	6%
other types	7%	2%	2%

Results

Comparisons to U.S. Data

For purposes of comparison, we will present our results for the Alberta Area Study (AAS) in tables with the 1985 U.S. results, since the latter are temporally closest to the present study. Tables 6 and 7 demonstrate comparisons of the AAS and

1985 U.S, results. In Table 6, we see that Overall Violence rates (all items on the Conflict Tactics Scale) are virtually identical between the U.S. and Alberta samples, with rates of 11.3 and 11.2 respectively for Husband to Wife violence. However, Severe Husband to Wife violence (items 4 -8) was less in Alberta. The reported rate of 2.3 per hundred couples is 76.6% of the U.S. rate.

Table 6

Marital Violence Indexes for 1985 U.S. and 1987 AAS

	Rate Per 100 Couples	
	U.S. (1985)	AAS* (1987)
A. Husband-to-Wife		
Overall Violence (1-8)	11.3	11.2
Severe Violence (4-8) ("wife beating")	3.0	2.3
B. Couple		
Overall Violence (1-8)	15.8	15.1
Severe Violence (4-8)	5.8	5.5
Number of Cases	3,520	708

*These figures do not include choking as it was not available from the U.S. study. This made up 0.6 % of the cases of husband and to wife violence in the AAS.

Couple violence rates were quite similar in the Alberta and U.S. samples. Table 7 presents item by item analyses of violence use which indicate that, as violence becomes more severe, male Albertans become correspondingly less likely to use it. Item 6 (beat up) is reported only 25% as frequently as for the U.S. sample. Item 7 (threatened with knife or gun) also 25%. The use

of a knife or gun (item 8) was not reported by the population in Alberta.

Table 7

Husband to Wife Violence: Comparison of Specific Acts For 1985 U.S. and 1987 AAS

Type of Violence	Rate Per 100 Couples U.S. (1985)	AAS (1987)
A. Minor Violence Acts		
1. Threw Something	2.8	4.2
2. Pushed/Grabbed/Shoved	9.3	9.2
3. Slapped	2.9	1.7
B. Severe Violence Acts		
4. Kicked/Bit/Hit with Fist	1.5	.9
5. Hit, Tried to Hit with Something	1.7	1.6
6. Beat Up	0.8	.2
7. Threatened with Gun/Knife	0.4	.1
8. Used Gun or Knife	0.2	0.0
Number of Cases	3,520	708

Straus et.al (1980) report that wife assault rates in the U.S, are remarkably stable from region to region (unlike other violent crime rates which fluctuate greatly). This being the case, the Alberta wife assault rates could be said to be generally lower than any U.S. rates. This raises the question whether a national Canadian study would continue to find generally lower rates. The higher levels of family violence in the United States should not be of too much surprise as the overall rates of crime are lower in Canada than in the U.S. Homicide rates in Canada, for example, are close to a third of

those in the United States. We could actually interpret the family violence incidence reported here as being surprisingly high, given the comparatively lower homicide rates.

Looking at the Alberta data, we have looked at several demographic factors in their relationship to family violence (see Table 8). Age clearly affects wife assault rates, with the highest rates 19.5% occurring for the 18 to 34 age category. Extremely high rates are also reported by single, separated and divorced people (including only those living in a marriage like relationship in the previous year), implicating violence as a contributing factor to relationship breakup. Wife assault rates were also extremely high for young people still in school (20.5%).

Area size had a slight effect on wife assault rates which ranged from 8.3% for Overall Violence in small towns with populations under 1000 to 14.1% in Edmonton. Household income also affected the reported rates; households with incomes of $6 -16000 reported Overall Husband to wife violence rates of 13.8%, compared to 7.5% for those with incomes over $45,000.

Table 8

Husband to Wife Violence by Selected Demographic Variables in the All Alberta Survey 1987

	%	Total N
Age		
18-24	19.5	284
35-44	9.9	179
45-64	2.9	170
65+	1.9	76
Marital Status		
Single	43.7	16
Married	8.7	631
Common-Law	24.4	48
Divorced	39.8	4
Separated	54.8	7
Employment Status		
Employed Full-time	13.2	356
Employed Part-time	10.3	90
Unemployed	17.7	40
Retired	2.8	72
In School	20.5	20
Keeping House	6.6	125
Area Size		
under 1000	8.3	88
1000-9999	7.6	153
10000-99999	13.3	132
Calgary	11.6	178
Edmonton	14.1	155
Household Income		
Under 6000	55.0	9
6000-15999	13.8	66
16000-29999	14.7	121
30000-44999	13.8	151
45000+	7.5	291

Knowledge of Abuse in the Community

A series of questions were asked of respondents concerning their knowledge of wife assault that has occurred among people that they know. Forty-six percent report that they have known a woman who has been abused by her husband. This include psychological, as well as, physical abuse. Of these cases, 15.5% happened in the last year. Most often, in 44.8% of the cases, the victim was a friend of the respondent while in about a third of the cases, family members were involved. In only about a third of the cases, did the respondent admit to having done anything about the problem. Where something was done, counselling was offered to the victim in half the cases and the respondent intervened in about a third of the cases.

Police were called in 38.7% of the cases known about. This is a bit of a surprise, as women reporting their own experience with abuse rarely call the police, indicating that criminal justice intervention appears to come because of the actions of others. These figures indicate that while spousal violence is prevalent in the community, people are unlikely to get involved or to get the police involved in the problem.

Perceptions of Consequences of Wife Assault

The argument has been made that wife assault remains prevalent in our society because it is viewed as acceptable behaviour (Straus 1977,Dobash & Dobash 1979). The present study finds, however, that the overwhelming majority of both genders

clearly indicated that they viewed it as unacceptable behaviour. Male respondents were asked to imagine an hypothetical situation where they hit their wives as a result of marital conflict. On a 10 point where 10 indicated a sure chance of losing their self-respect if this were to happen, 68.8% indicated a score of 8 or higher, and only 11.6% a score of 0 -2. Similarly, 54.6% of male respondents indicated scores of 8 -10 where 10 indicated a sure chance of disapproval from their friends or relatives.

Table 9 indicates that all respondents of both genders perceive wife assault to have severe consequences for the victim, with 77.2% of males rating the consequences as 8 -10 on a 10 point scale of severity.

Table 9

Perception of the Severity of Harm of Wife Abuse to Victim By Gender of Respondent

	Male	Female	Total
Least Severe 1-3	8 (1.5)	4 (.8)	12
Medium Severity 4-7	108 (21.2)	67 (12.7)	175
Most Severe 8-10	393 (77.2)	455 (86.6)	848
Total	509	526	1035

The perceived consequences of being hit by one's spouse vary greatly with gender. Responses to a survey question which asked respondents to rate the severity of being hit back by their spouse if they were to hit their spouse are presented in Table 10. This indicates that amongst women who reported no violence

46.4% rated being hit by their husband as very severe. Amongst women who did report violence 42.4% did the same. Corresponding rates for male respondents rating being hit by their wives as severe were 23% and 8.8%. Hence, the overwhelming majority of the male sample see female violence as inconsequential for the male. This pattern contrasts sharply for females who see their own victimization as very serious.

Table 10

Consequences in Terms of Severity of Spouse Hitting Back to Hurt by Gender of Respondent By Whether or Not Husband Hit Wife in the Last Year

	Hit				
	Yes		No		
Consequences	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Not Severe 0-2	27 (60.0)	10 (30.3)	117 (42.3)	74 (26.3)	228
Medium Severity 3-6	14 (31.1)	9 (27.2)	96 (34.7)	77 (27.3)	196
Very Severe 7-10	4 (8.8)	14 (42.4)	63 (23.0)	130 (46.4)	211
Total	45	33	276	281	635

Summary and Conclusions

Our data analysis of demographic factors reveal a few trends worth noting. The high incidence of violence amongst separated, divorced and single people (who were living in a relationship the preceding year) is noteworthy. Although we cannot ascertain the role of violence in causing the eventual separation, this possibility deserves further investigation. Although the sample of singles, separated and divorced people living in a marriage

like relationship in the last year in this survey was small (n=27), almost half reported violence.

The 20.5% rate amongst young adults in school is also cause for concern. Kalmuss & Seltzer (1986) found that repertoires of conflict tactics develop in first serious relationships which occur around college age for most people. These repertoires, once established, tend to transfer to later relationships.This being the case our findings of high incidence rates for persons 18 - 34, underscores the need for effective preventive programmes for marital conflict resolution.

The All Alberta Survey is the first representative sample survey of family violence in Canada. At the present time we are still in the process of analyzing and interpreting the wealth of data collected. At present it is fair to conclude that family violence rates in Alberta are comparable to rates in all U.S. regions. The severe wife assault appears to be less but put into the context of comparative rates of crime, these levels should be considered serious. More specifically, the highest rates are in the youngest segments of the population. This is cause for some concern since this population will constitute the major policy target of health and criminal justice systems in the next decade. At the present time there is a very strong need for a national incidence survey if we are to generate empirically informed social policy.

Of concern, as well, is the high level of abuse in a climate of non-involvement by others. The response that wife assault is

a private matter no longer holds and yet there seems to be a reluctance to get involved. This may be solved through more concerted efforts to educate the public about what they can do to help battered women and to assist the police in dealing more directly with this problem.

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